

California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training
PATROL OFFICER PSYCHOLOGICAL SCREENING DIMENSIONS

DIMENSION 1: SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Social competence involves communicating with others in a tactful and respectful manner, and showing sensitivity and concern in one's daily interactions. Social competence includes:

- The ability to “read” people and an awareness of the impact of one's own words and behavior on others (Social Awareness);
- Interest and concern for the feelings of others (Empathy);
- Tact and impartiality in treating all members of society (Tolerance); and
- The ability and comfort in approaching individuals, and in confronting and reducing interpersonal conflict (Social-Self Confidence/Conflict Management).

Positive Behaviors:

- Reads peoples' motives and anticipates their reactions by picking up on verbal and behavioral cues;
- Recognizes needs and concerns of others;
- Resolves problems in ways that do not arouse unnecessary antagonism;
- Calms emotional/angry people and defuses conflicts through mediation, negotiation and persuasion rather than force (when appropriate);
- Recognizes the impact of one's own verbal and nonverbal communications on others (and makes sure both are consistent and appropriate);
- Refrains from making remarks that could be interpreted as rude or condescending;
- Interacts with all others in a courteous and respectful manner;
- Listens to others patiently and attentively (within reason) to gather needed information, gain cooperation, etc., while, at the same time, staying focused on the task;
- Is considerate when duties lead to physical or emotional pain/discomfort of others, including victims, witnesses and suspects ;
- Assists others when needed, even when some personal sacrifice is involved;
- Communicates tactfully and effectively with individuals across the gamut of society, even when giving constructive criticism;
- Provides service/renders aid or assistance in an unbiased fashion;
- Aware of and sensitive to social, economic and cultural differences, including those associated with gender, sexual orientation, race and religion;
- Sensitive and respectful when interacting with the elderly, disabled and those with special needs; and
- Willingly provides aid and assistance to all individuals.

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Baits people; takes personal offense at comments, insults, or criticism;*
- *Provokes suspects and others by officious bearing, gratuitous verbal challenge, or through physical contact;*
- *Antagonizes community members and others;*

- *Uses profanity and other inappropriate language;*
- *Refuses to listen to explanations from members of the community and others;*
- *Performs job duties in a way so as to minimize or avoid interactions with others;*
- *Makes inappropriate comments to or about others regarding personal characteristics as well as derogatory comments about specific groups (racial, gender, sexual orientation, proficiency with the English language, immigrant status, HIV/AIDS infection, religion, transgender, social status);*
- *Inability to recognize how one's own emotions/behavior affect situations and others;*
- *Makes hasty, biased judgments based on physical appearance, race, gender, or other group membership characteristics; and*
- *Avoids confrontations at all costs.*

DIMENSION 2: TEAMWORK

Teamwork involves working effectively with others to accomplish goals, as well as subordinating personal interests for the good of the working group and the organization. It involves establishing and maintaining effective, cooperative working relationships with co-workers, supervisors, clients, representatives of other organizations, and others. Teamwork consists of:

- Sharing information and providing assistance and support to co-workers, supervisors, and others;
- Balancing personal ambitions with organizational/team goals;
- Performing one's fair share in a group effort;
- Collaborating effectively with others to accomplish work goals, as necessary; and
- Not allowing personal differences to affect working relationships.

Positive Behaviors:

- Supports and recognizes the accomplishment of team members;
- Willingly offers, initiates, and provides assistance to fellow officers;
- Invites and welcomes input and assistance from the community and others;
- Supports group efforts rather than competing for individual recognition;
- Solicits input and assistance from community partners and others outside the agency to accomplish work goals; and
- Forges partnerships to accomplish goals.

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Resents successes and accomplishments of team members;*
- *Does not assist fellow officers or other team members;*
- *Avoids asking others for assistance;*
- *Alienates colleagues by dominating interactions and activities; and*
- *Gossips, criticizes, and backstabs colleagues and coworkers.*

DIMENSION 3: ADAPTABILITY/FLEXIBILITY

Adaptability/flexibility involve the ability to change gears and easily adjust to the many different, sudden, and sometimes competing demands of the job. Adaptability/flexibility consist of:

- Appropriately shifting between various work roles, such as facilitator, rule enforcer, etc.;
- Adjusting to planned and unplanned work changes, including different types of incidents that must be handled one right after another;
- Prioritizing and working effectively on several very different tasks/projects at the same time;
- Uses appropriate judgment and discretion in applying regulations and policies; understands the difference between the letter and the spirit of rules and laws;
- Performs duties without constant supervision or instructions;
- Works in unstructured situations with minimal supervision;
- Adjusts to differing supervisory styles; and
- Can physically and mentally adjust to shift work.

Positive Behaviors:

- Easily changes gears in response to unpredictable or unexpected events and circumstances;
- Willingly accepts and appropriately implements changes in policy, organizational practices and law (e.g., video cameras in car; racial profiling data collection, etc.);
- Accepts and easily adapts to changes in work assignments;
- Accepts and easily adjusts to changes in operations, goals, actions, modes of conduct or priorities to deal with changing situations;
- Anticipates changes in work demands by locating and participating in assignments or training that will prepare self for these changes;
- Selects a correct mode of operation for the situation: law enforcer, public servant, etc.; and
- Makes sudden adjustments in use of force as appropriate.

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Needs directives to be in black and white;*
- *Fails to exercise appropriate discretion in carrying out duties (for example, is a “misdemeanor cop” - everybody gets a ticket);*
- *Never takes action; spends too much time on minor infractions—unable to set priorities; and*
- *Is paralyzed by uncertainty or ambiguity.*

DIMENSION 4: CONSCIENTIOUSNESS/DEPENDABILITY

Conscientiousness/dependability involve diligent, reliable, conscientious work patterns, and performing in a timely, logical manner in accordance with rules, regulations and organizational policies. Conscientiousness/dependability include:

- Carrying assigned tasks through to successful and timely completion;
- Maintaining a punctual, reliable attendance record;
- Persevering in the face of obstacles, difficulties, long hours and other adverse working conditions;

- Staying organized;
- Carefully attending to details (e.g., typos, missing/incorrect information);
- Staying current on new rules, procedures, etc.;
- Maintaining accountability for one's work, and analyzing prior mistakes or problems to improve performance;
- Performing effectively under difficult and uncomfortable conditions;
- A promise made is a promise kept; and
- Continually works to achieve or restore trust with peers, supervisors and clients.

Positive Behaviors:

- Strives to meet deadlines and otherwise complete work in timely manner;
- Stays current on new rules, procedures, and relevant case law;
- Works overtime when necessary to meet organizational needs;
- Initiates proper action without needing to wait for instruction;
- Does more than just handle calls; productively uses unstructured time to identify and resolve problems on the beat, address community problems and otherwise meet agency goals;
- Follows through and completes tasks within the expected timeframe;
- Honors and follows through on commitments, even when it's inconvenient or unpleasant to do so;
- Focuses on accomplishing the task rather than watching the clock;
- Safeguards the property entrusted to them;
- Makes sure the job is done correctly rather than just going through the motions;
- Attends to all aspects of projects and activities to be sure they are completed;
- Maintains knowledge of other agencies to provide referrals to community members as appropriate;
- Completes accurate and timely reports; reports on work in progress as necessary;
- Maintains skill and fitness levels; and
- Arrives at appointments on time (or ahead of time whenever possible).

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Sneaks out before shift is over;*
- *Fails to comply with instructions or orders;*
- *Procrastinates;*
- *Loses case information or other valuable information;*
- *Causes unnecessary and inappropriate property damage while conducting searches or making arrests;*
- *Coasts toward the end of the shift;*
- *Poor attendance – takes time off from work unnecessarily;*
- *Deliberately fails to complete assignments in order to accrue unnecessary overtime;*
- *Takes excessive/extended breaks;*
- *Wastes time “shooting the breeze”;*
- *Misses scheduled court appearances or other important appointments;*
- *Fails to properly prepare for court appearances;*
- *Finds ways to avoid taking necessary training (e.g., range dates, CPT, physical training);*
- *Fails to maintain department equipment;*
- *Fails to properly report damage to equipment;*

- *Conducts unauthorized personal business while on duty;*
- *Gives up or cuts corners when faced with obstacles; and*
- *Performs job duties in a way that requires the minimum amount of effort (e.g., discounts citizen complaints to avoid writing separate reports, ignores signs which might be present of crimes/problems unrelated to the reason for the call, investigates at the bare minimum level, etc.).*

DIMENSION 5: IMPULSE CONTROL/ATTENTION TO SAFETY

Impulse control/attention to safety involve taking proper precautions and avoiding impulsive and/or unnecessarily risky behavior to ensure the safety of oneself and others. It includes the ability and inclination to think before acting – to keep one’s impetuous, knee-jerk reactions in check, and instead behave in conscious regard for the larger situation at hand. It also includes:

- Driving and otherwise behaving within one’s own limits;
- Taking proper precautions to maximally ensure safe performance;
- Thinking things through before acting (including considering consequences), rather than doing the first thing that comes to mind, yet takes decisive action when warranted;
- Careful use and maintenance of personal and agency/company equipment and materials;
- Safe driving practices during routine and high arousal activities; and
- Attention to and awareness of hazards.

Positive Behaviors:

- Keeps all equipment well maintained, including firearms, OC spray, edged weapons, vehicle, flashlight, baton, tactical vest, radio, cell phone, etc.;
- Consistently possesses all issued equipment;
- Doesn’t take unnecessary risks such as speeding, taking on too many individuals without backup, etc.;
- Takes proper precautions during and after vehicle pursuits, traffic stops, administering emergency assistance/first aid, etc.;
- Responds optimally to deadly force situations;
- Thinks before acting;
- Complies with safety rules (wears seatbelt, uses helmet when biking, motorcycle-riding, etc.);
- Recognizes the impact of personal injury on performance; and
- Drives in control.

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Brandishes or is otherwise careless with firearms;*
- *Disregards risk to self or others - exhibits “tombstone courage;”*
- *Fails to properly search suspects for weapons during apprehension;*
- *Drives recklessly and at excessive speeds;*
- *Gets in avoidable/excessive traffic accidents;*
- *Lives in the moment at the expense of accomplishing long-term objectives;*
- *Takes unnecessary, foolhardy risks;*
- *Reacts in a knee-jerk manner to emergency events (e.g., entering a “burglary-in-progress” alone rather than waiting for backup);*

- *Acts without thinking;*
- *Overreacts when challenged or criticized;*
- *Involved in, and/or arrested for, off-duty incidents;*
- *Speeds and drives recklessly off duty;*
- *Gets in off-duty altercations.*

DIMENSION 6: INTEGRITY/ETHICS

Integrity/ethics involve maintaining high standards of personal conduct. It consists of attributes such as honesty, impartiality, trustworthiness, and abiding laws, regulations, and procedures. It includes:

- Not abusing the system or using one's position for personal gain;
- Not bending rules or otherwise trying to beat the system; and
- Not engaging in illegal or immoral activities – either on or off the job.

Positive Behaviors:

- Gives honest testimony;
- Prepares truthful and accurate sworn affidavits;
- Does not yield to temptations of bribes, favors, gratuities, or payoffs;
- Refuses to share or release confidential information;
- Confronts coworkers who engage in unethical/illegal conduct;
- Takes action to prevent unethical/illegal conduct by others;
- Deals honestly (although tactfully) with community, coworkers, supervisors, etc.

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Shades the truth, omits facts, makes false or misleading statements, or otherwise engages in “creative writing”;*
- *Lies, misrepresents and commits perjury;*
- *Lies about his/her mistakes or oversights;*
- *Uses the badge to solicit gratuities or favors, either on or off-duty;*
- *Steals;*
- *Tampers with evidence, slants reports and/or provides inaccurate testimony to meet personal needs;*
- *Uses access to confidential information for self-serving purposes;*
- *Uses bullying, flattery, trickery, and other devious methods when uncalled for by the situation;*
- *Breaks/bends rules, believing that the end justifies the means;*
- *Uses the position to receive sexual and/or monetary favors;*
- *Fraudulently reports sick and/or annual leave;*
- *Bends rules for personal gain or satisfaction;*
- *Abuses privileges and benefits of the job (e.g., take-home car, overtime, court time, etc.);*
- *Resorts to “street justice” rather than adhering to laws, agency policies, etc.;*
- *Succumbs to peer pressure to adhere to “code of silence”;*
- *Involved in the sale or distribution of illegal drugs;*
- *Inappropriate professional boundary issues (e.g., relationships with victims, informants, etc.);*
- *Engages in inappropriate sexual activity (e.g., prostitutes, sex with minors, etc.); and*

- *Transgresses professional boundaries by initiating inappropriate personal relationships with victims and others.*

DIMENSION 7: EMOTIONAL REGULATION/STRESS TOLERANCE

Emotional regulation/stress tolerance involve the ability to maintain composure and stay in control, particularly during time-critical emergency events and other stressful situations. It includes taking the negative aspects of the job in stride and maintaining an even temperament, as well as accepting criticism rather than becoming overly defensive or allowing it to hamper job performance. It includes:

- Acceptance/ownership of personal limitations and mistakes;
- Ability to perform under difficult, threatening situations;
- Maintaining positive self image under adverse circumstances;
- Maintaining even-tempered composure and demeanor; and
- Proper use of force.

Positive Behaviors:

- Accepts responsibility for actions and mistakes; does not routinely make excuses or blame others for own shortcomings;
- Even tempered;
- Uses constructive criticism to improve performance;
- Makes timely, responsible decisions and actions in dangerous/crisis situations;
- Can perform in the face of personal threat, where people are capable of life-threatening violence;
- Stays calm in the face of verbal abuse from others;
- Demonstrates emotional resilience by bouncing back from negative situations;
- Accepts that system injustices and inequities are beyond their control, rather than letting them impact their emotional state and job performance;
- Proper escalation and de-escalation of force; using force only when necessary, and then just the amount needed to apprehend a suspect, search the property or residence, etc.;
- Handles the negative aspects of the job relatively well, without extreme negativity/cynicism; and
- Curbs personal aversions (e.g., child molesters) from interfering with professional job performance.

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Never acknowledges or admits to shortcomings or mistakes;*
- *Experiences performance-impairing mood swings;*
- *Becomes excessively defensive or otherwise overreacts when challenged or criticized;*
- *Consistently blames others (or circumstances) for mistakes made;*
- *Worries excessively and enters into new situations with considerable apprehension;*
- *Overly suspicious and distrusting in dealing with others;*
- *Denies impact of stress-inducing incidents;*
- *Commonly behaves with hostility and anger;*
- *Suffers reactions to job stress, both near-term (anxiety, worry) and long-term (e.g., physical symptoms, burnout, substance abuse);*
- *Overly self-critical of one's job performance;*

- *Is “always right”-- not open to others’ ideas, suggestions, etc.;*
- *Argues at the drop of a hat;*
- *Badmouths the agency and associated organizations;*
- *Unable to cope with stress: worries excessively or suffers other signs of anxiety;*
- *Unnecessarily confrontational and aggressive;*
- *Comes “unglued,” freezes, or otherwise performs ineffectively when feeling overloaded or stressed;*
- *Antagonistic toward fellow officers; e.g., uses abusive, condescending language; disrespectful;*
- *Disrupts/undermines authority (fails to successfully carry out directives; shows signs of contempt by eye rolling, excessive exhaling, etc.);*
- *Excessive, unrestrained use of force;*
- *Allows personal problems and stressors to bleed into behavior on the job; and*
- *Fails to deescalate at conclusion of pursuit.*

DIMENSION 8: DECISION-MAKING/JUDGMENT

Decision-making/judgment involve common sense, "street smarts," and the ability to make sound decisions, demonstrated by the ability to size up situations quickly to determine and take the appropriate action. It also involves the ability to sift through information to glean that which is important, and, once identified, to use that information effectively. It includes:

- Thinking on one’s feet, using practical judgment and efficient problem solving;
- Prioritizing competing demands;
- Developing creative and innovative solutions to problems;
- Basing decisions on the collection and consideration of important information; and
- Applying deductive and inductive reasoning, as necessary.

Positive Behaviors:

- Gathers and critically evaluates important information before deciding on a course of action;
- Knows when to confront—and when to back away from—potentially volatile situations;
- Makes timely, sound decisions on the spot, if necessary, even in situations where information is incomplete and/or conflicting;
- Can step into a tense situation involving several people and figure out what probably led up to that point in time, as well as what is likely to happen as the situation unfolds;
- Expediently sizes up situations and identifies the underlying problem(s);
- Generates new, creative/innovative ideas and solutions to situations and problems when necessary/advantageous;
- Applies lessons learned from past mistakes/experiences when faced with similar problems;
- Can identify similarities and differences between situations confronted on a regular basis;
- Uses a methodical, step-by-step approach to solve complex problems, as appropriate;
- Comprehends and retains a good deal of factual information, and is able to recall information pertaining to community concerns, laws, codes, etc.; and
- Selects an approach that is lawful as well as optimal for the situation.

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Succumbs to “analysis paralysis:” inability to make decisions when options are not clear-cut or obvious;*
- *Unable or unwilling to make “midcourse corrections” on initial course of action when presented with new information or when circumstances change;*
- *Naive, overly trusting, easily duped;*
- *Has tunnel vision; does not see the big picture when analyzing information; and*
- *Fails to identify patterns and implications when analyzing information.*

DIMENSION 9: ASSERTIVENESS/PERSUASIVENESS

Assertiveness/persuasiveness involve unhesitatingly taking control of situations in a calm and appropriately assertive manner, even under dangerous or adverse conditions. It includes the ability to:

- Confront individuals when appropriate;
- Act assertively and without hesitation;
- Not be easily intimidated;
- Use force, including deadly force, when necessary;
- Assert ideas and persuade others to adopt desired course of action;
- Command respect; and
- Emanate professional pride and demeanor.

Note: Extreme dominance and overaggression are not part of this dimension; rather, they are included as anger control in Emotional Regulation and Stress Tolerance (Dimension 7), and overbearing insensitivity in Social Competence (Dimension 1).

Positive Behaviors:

- Takes effective, expedient action in crisis situations;
- Unhesitatingly intervenes in situations when necessary or warranted;
- Confronts problems, even in potentially volatile situations; doesn’t back away unless tactically necessary;
- Able to persuade/mediate disputes and conflicts;
- Able to use voice commands to control conflict, speaking calmly, clearly and authoritatively;
- Can appropriately take control in group situations, coordinating resources, etc.;
- Judicious and discrete in the exercise of peace officer powers; and
- Confronts fellow officers who abuse authority or engage in other inappropriate acts.

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Delays acting in crisis, time-critical situations until every fact is known and a total picture of the situation is formed;*
- *Displays submissiveness and insecurity when confronting challenging or threatening situations;*
- *Is hesitant to exert influence in uncomfortable/stressful situations;*
- *Overbearingly takes over control of situations, thereby escalating tensions and risks;*

- *Avoids interpersonal conflict at all costs;*
- *Fails to take action when required or requested; and*
- *Overly concerned with the negative reactions of others.*

DIMENSION 10: AVOIDING SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND OTHER RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOR

Avoiding substance abuse and other risk-taking behavior involves avoiding participation in behavior that is inappropriate, self-damaging, and can adversely impact organizational functioning. This includes alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, sale of drugs, and gambling.

Counterproductive Behaviors:

- *Abuses alcohol and legally prescribed drugs (e.g., pain killers, steroids);*
- *Uses illegal drugs;*
- *Misses work due to alcohol use;*
- *Drinks alcohol on duty;*
- *Arrives at work intoxicated/smelling of alcohol or hung-over;*
- *Involved in and/or arrested for off-duty incidents;*
- *History of DUI arrests;*
- *Gambles to the point of causing harm to oneself;*
- *Engages in self-destructive coping behaviors; and*
- *Commits domestic violence.*